

# Searching for a method: in between the aesthetic and the history of domestic images during Brazil's military dictatorship<sup>1</sup>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1809-5844202029>

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## Abstract

This paper intends to present the process of construction of an analytical method used to study archive images when used in contemporary films. Our purpose is to show the development of this particular research field, the way we analyze these archives from the moment they were made to their reutilization years later, the links between the documents, the challenges we faced along the way and the particularities of Brazil's archival situation. To establish the practical use of this method we chose to analyze the domestic images that were shot during Brazil's militar dictatorship and the way they are used in the film "Que bom te ver viva" (Lúcia Murat, 1989).

**Keywords:** Archive Image. Analysis method. Military dictatorship. Brazilian cinema. Home movie.

## Introduction

If the Retake (*tn. Brazilian cinematic renaissance*) and image manipulation have become more frequent in the last two decades of Brazilian film production (LINS; MESQUITA, 2008), the academic interest in analyzing the introduction of these methods in pre-existing images have drawn some Brazilian researchers' attention only in the last ten years. This interest can mostly be seen through article publication and presentations from work groups such as Socine's Work Group (Brazilian Cinema and Audiovisual Study

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, we present the first results of an ongoing research realized with the funding of PIBIC/CNPq (2017-2019). A version of this work was presented as a communication in the 2017 Compós.

Association) – Subjectivity, Essay Appropriation and Enactment<sup>2</sup>. In midst of such growing theoretical production dealing with the different processes of retake and re-signification of images from the past in contemporary productions, we propose in this article to explore the acceptance process from an analysis method that emerged through the discovery of the work of French historian Sylvie Lindeperg.

The research method developed by Lindeperg (1997, 2000, 2007, 2013) in the last decade is dedicated to investigate the production conditions and circulation of imagery from the Second World War in cinematic and journalistic productions. This method –which details we shall explore in this article –, as developed by the historian, derives from the assumption that a complex approach to these images and its reuse strategies are a result of an encounter between historiographical perspective and aesthetical analysis.

In the past seven years, we devoted ourselves to Lindeperg's (1997, 2000, 2007, 2013) propositions as a means to rescue the production context of images that are reused in contemporary films, in one hand, and on the other, are themselves carriers of an unknown history, which traces and its own materiality itself are menaced by time. In this article, we intend to demonstrate how, inspired by Lindeperg (1997, 2000, 2007, 2013), we have developed our own analytical method, generated in the specific Brazilian imagery and archive context. It is, also, through the search for this method that we initiated the project "*Entre o político e o íntimo: o cinema doméstico sob a ditadura militar brasileira*" in 2017, which intends to locate family imagery produced between 1964 and 1985 to reconstitute its production context and trace its migrant trajectories: from take to *retake*.

To demonstrate this method's functioning, we will focus on the analysis of a footage produced in Super-8 in 1976 at Talavera Bruce prison, in Rio de Janeiro. The short family film shows the political militant Jessie Jane, with her newborn, in prison. This material was retaken by filmmaker Lucia Murat in "*Que bom te ver viva*" (1989), a fundamentally important film<sup>3</sup> for being the first of its kind to have shown, on screen, testimonies of political militants that were arrested and tortured during the military dictatorship. In this feature, the militant's statements that were given to the director are set with reenactments by actress Irene Ravache, herself an alter-ego of Lúcia Murat, once a political prisoner, also. In this article, we reiterate, the aesthetical and historical analysis of imagery will serve as a case study with the main objective to demonstrate the functioning and some results reached by the method hereby discussed.

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<sup>2</sup> The Work Group, created by Andrea França, Consuelo Lins and Henri Gervaiseau fonctionned from 2012 to 2014 and one of its purposes was the research of films that use archive images.

<sup>3</sup> The film was contemplated in multiple International Festivals. In the Brasilia Film Festival, it won the Popular Jury, the Official Jury and the Critique's Best Feature Award, among others. This achievement occurred in a Festival on the eve of the first direct-vote elections for the Presidency of the Republic, after the end of dictatorship.

## The search for origin and trajectory of images

In 1989, filmmaker Lucia Murat made her first film with testimonies from women over the experience of the pursuit, imprisonment and torture suffering during the Brazilian military dictatorship. Among them is Jessie Jane, arrested in 1970 at the age of 21 for the (frustrated) hijacking of a plane headed from Rio de Janeiro to Buenos Aires. This political militant's intention, along with three other colleagues, was to flee the country and demand the release of other political prisoners<sup>4</sup>. But the action didn't end as expected, the airplane was surrounded by the air force, one of the kidnappers was assassinated and others detained. Jessie Jane lived for nine years in prison, mostly at Talavera Bruce jail in Bangú. She was tortured in the first months still imprisoned at the Galeão airport, she even lived in a jail cell for over one year, and along the years, she earned rights, one of which was the right to intimate visits from her companion Colombo, who also participated in the plane hijacking and was doing time in Lemos de Brito jail, in the same neighborhood. After one of those visits, Jessie was pregnant.

In Lúcia Murat's film, we see an emotional Jessie Jane after watching the brief home footage shot in Super 8, where we see her breastfeeding her daughter Leta, who stayed in the first months of her life by her side in prison. In the eighties, Brazilian cinema seemed to understand the need to produce narratives associated to the notion of attestation, to prove what had been going on (MARTINS; MACHADO, 2014) and the duty to reveal, after the dictatorship, the traumatic memory that had been suffocated<sup>5</sup>. Murat's film also shares this premise, the documentary's main objective being giving voice to women who survived torture and registering in History the testimonies of this experience. In this context, this rare Super 8 footage's retake strategy filmed in prison limits to an illustrative use of image. The home movie's frames enter the documentary as images covering Jessie's testimony. Murat is not interested in questioning the specificities of this document; how it was possible to record in prison, who held the camera and how did these images survive are questions put aside in "*Que bom te ver viva*" (Glad to see you alive).

These are fundamental questions all across Sylvie Lindeperg's methodology. Instructed by the New History movement, with the works of historian Marc Ferro and social scientist Pierre Sorlin, which treated cinema as a documental source, incorporating moving images to historic narratives<sup>6</sup>, Lindeperg (2013, p. 11) proposes that film fragments should be

4 All this information was given by Jessie Jane to Clóvis Molinari, in the program "*Super-8: Tamanho também é documento*". In this first research, we recovered Jessie Jane's interviews on her own history and prioritized interviews that hadn't been made. In a posterior phase, our intention was to interview her as a way to amplify and deepen our analysis for other articles.

5 Films such as "*Janio a 24 Quadros*" (Luiz Alberto Pereira, 1982), "*Jango*" (Silvio Tendler, 1984), "*Cabra marcado pra morrer*" (Eduardo Coutinho, 1984), "*Céu Aberto*" (João Batista de Andrade, 1985) and "*Terra para Rose*" (Tetê Moraes, 1987) belong in this category.

6 Since 1898, Boleslas Matuszewski, the cinematographer who worked for the Lumière brothers drew attention to the importance of the constitution of archives and to the use of motion pictures as an indispensable source for history. However, as pointed by Moretin (2013, p.12), it is only in the seventies that "cinema was elevated to the category of "new object" and definitely incorporated to historical procedure under the New History dominion".

comprised as an opening “path for the eyes and sensitivity to history, closely registered next to the bodies of those who made the event, be they actors, witnesses or victims”. In a pioneer and instigating way, her proposition is to think about the circumstances of these images’ production, about *gestures*, *hesitations* and *choices* of the person filming, about the looks laying over them through the trails following right after the moment they are produced.

The historian begins almost all of her books by acknowledging the way in which all depictions of the Second World War are constructed in cinema. In her analysis, Lindeperg (1997, 2000, 2007, 2013) shows us how history can reconfigure through the spectator’s perception of a feature. She uses fiction films and contemporary documentaries that retake archive imagery from the period as examples intending to illustrate reality, cover imprecisions and voids and recreate reality to their own measure. She, therefor, identifies uniformity tendencies in the way history is written through cinema (LINDEPERG, 2013), and a pretentious intent of these films in narrating, once and for all, the truth about those events.

Oppositely, the movement that interests Lindeperg (1997, 2000, 2007, 2013) is the exploration of film archives and analysis of its origins, the perspectives cast on them through the years and the transformations subjected to them. The historiographical dimension is already noted in her first book, “*Les Écrans de l’ombre. La Seconde Guerre mondiale dans le cinéma français (1944-1969)*”. In this book, Lindeperg (1997) treats the different cinematographic uses of the Second World War in “historical” films produced in France from 1944 to 1969 and investigates in what way the period known by the French as *années noires* was constantly reconfigured by cinema contextualized to the logic of the present time (*temps présent*).

In this first book, Lindeperg (1997) isn’t yet devoted to archive cinema, a theme that will later become central in her work, especially with “*Nuit et brouillard: un film dans l’histoire*” (2007). In the latter, the author accomplishes a detailed investigation on the images taken by director Alain Resnais in the making of “Night and fog” (1995), also recovering the story behind the making of the film and its subsequent trajectory. But it is only in her last book, “*La voie des images – quatre histoires de tournage au printemps/été 1944*”, published in 2013, that her analysis appears concentrated on the brief and singular moment of the take. Attentions drawn to the looks and gestures of the filmmaker, the proposition is to know the filmmaker to further on enter the width of the screenshot and the images’ depths with special attentions on details, secondary characters and scenario. The exploration of what is called potency of the detail will constitute one of the fundamental principles of Sylvie Lindeperg’s method. Inspired by historian Carlo Ginsburg and on analysis of paintings from art historian Daniel Arasse, the method consists in a long observation of the image, in several references to it and on the hope to make a detail emerge and turn the invisible into visible.

Due to the interest in historicizing the moment of the take, without neglecting the image’s temporal thickness, the first criteria adopted for the image’s analysis is the recognition of the authors, those who handle the camera. This is how Lindeperg (2013) is able to identify when images from the concentration camps were taken with or without the complicity

between filmmaker and subject<sup>7</sup>. With the search of the take's context, it is then possible to analyze the engagement and political and aesthetical choices of those who frame the images, entering what Lindeperg (1997) conceptualizes as cinema's "black box"<sup>8</sup>.

With this prerogative we have initiated a Super 8 imagery investigation used in "*Que bom te ver viva*" (Glad to see you alive). Lucia Murat reuses only a few seconds of this material. The research that we carried took us to the rough registration, presently held by the National Archive in Rio de Janeiro. Filmed during the subsequent months to Leta's birth, the seven minutes shot in Super 8 can distress the spectator when seen in their integrity. A tension survives in the footage, which intrigues and points to questions that Lucia Murat's scripts doesn't follow. How was it possible to make this footage? Who is the cinematographer behind these images? What was his/her purpose? What paths did it take before arriving at a public archive?

Moved by these questions, we searched the story behind the fabrication of this recording. However, from the start, we came across different challenges than those usually faced by Lindeperg (1997, 2000, 2007, 2013). As opposed to Europeans archives that constitute the object of Lindeperg's research, in which it is possible to find information on the archived footage, we ourselves never counted with additional information on this material aside from the rough images themselves, as found in the National Archive.

It is important to stress that it's a situation we quite often confront. In our research, we encounter so many difficulties in working cooperatively with archive conservation institutions. The lack of funding, public policies and even staff, transform all operative investigations happening inside cinematheques and public archives in Brazil into real odysseys. Defaulted data, or even inexistent, instigate inevitable direct contact between custodians and technicians. Since this experience, we include a practice that is not used by Lindeperg (1997, 2000, 2007, 2013): interviewing people that not only participated in the images' production, but in their conservation as well.

To recreate Jessie Jane's images trajectory, we start by interviewing Clóvis Molinari, that, while having been an intern at the National Archive, was also an old colleague from the magazine *Cadernos de Terceiro Mundo*. In that occasion, Jane handed to Clovis the original footage to be kept in the National Archive, which then preserved a small clandestine Super 8 archive.

<sup>7</sup> One of the most relevant examples proposed by Lindeperg comes from a detailed analysis of images taken at the Terezin concentration camp. The film, which was produced to be shown by the Red Cross, invented a travesty of a happy life in the camps, interpreted by the prisoners themselves, who were forced to participate in it. But on a plan's corner, the historian identifies a woman hiding her face, in a resistance gesture.

<sup>8</sup> The expression *black box* is used by Lindeperg for the first time in "*Les Écrans de l'ombre*" to define her work method, and is clearly inspired by philosopher Bruno Latour's procedure. In his book *Science in Action* (2000), Latour uses the black box image to approach a research method where the investigator doesn't satisfy in studying a final product and seeks to understand the complexity of its fabrication facts, by placing itself in the interior of what the philosopher calls a black box. Latour (2000) believes what we see today is like a finished, completed product, but it is actually a processing network where different factors, actors and mediators are implied, and that is what he is interested in unveiling.

In the interview, Molinari tells the Super 8 files were created without consent from the institution's direction. Involved with the "super eightist" movement from Rio de Janeiro, he saw in the National Archive a possibility to assure the conservation and survival of the for this and other features of that time. However, after consulting the direction of the possibility to create an archive, he heard a loud "no". For the institution's representatives, it didn't make any sense in harboring registrations in the National Archive that wouldn't be considered relevant to History. Even though, Molinari decided to create a shelf for small movies that entered the Archive unnoted on his own. This was the case for the movie delivered by Jessie Jane, which remained clandestine until the years 2000, when Molinari was conducted to the Archive's audiovisual coordination's office. Of all the Super 8 films kept in the fund, the one shot at the Talavera Bruce prison is actually the only one legalized. According to the researcher, litigation generated by the legalization of the movie drove him out of the coordination's office and condemned the rest of the files to clandestine obscurity. The movie rolls remain on the shelves, silently still.

The legalization process of the film in the Archive and its consequences for this researcher took Clóvis Molinari to direct an episode of the Brazilian TV series *Super-8 – tamanho também é documento*, entirely dedicated to this object. This 13-episode series narrate different aspects of Brazilian history and the Super 8 culture in the years 1970 and 1980.

On the episode dedicated to Jessie Jane, the filmmaker repeats Lucia Murat's composition in "*Que bom te ver viva*" and shows the recording for Jessie Jane. The difference, this time, is that the director asks the character to comment on its own depicted experience as a way to revive the memory of that time. With a soundtrack fit for a melodramatic feature, Molinari explores all the image's dramatic potency, driving interviewee and spectators to tears. Contrarily to Lucia Murat, Clovis Molinari nurtures an archival interest for the registration, aside from exploring the material's entirety, he seeks, as we do, to reveal part of its production context.

Through this series produced by Molinari, we have reached a central character in this story: the cinematographer behind the images. Clovis Molinari had the opportunity to interview Nelie Sá Pereira, who was a student in Paris in the seventies and was sister to Norma Sá Pereira, a political prisoner and Jessie Jane's companion in prison. In this interview, Nelie says the idea for the film happened after a visit to Norma. The objective was to give the footage of Jessie with her newborn in prison to the militant's mother, who was exiled in Sweden and wished to start a campaign for the judiciary opening to her daughter's case with the help of Amnesty International. Nelie's say in the episode solves part of the mystery surrounding the images. How was it possible to film in prison? In February 1977, Nelie visited Norma along with their father, lawyer Jessé Sá Pereira, who, for being known and respected in that prison, was relieved from body search. The Super 8 camera was small enough to fit his vest's pocket.

In prison with her camera in hand, the young cinema student could put in practice what she had learned about cinematographic grammar. And there lies a central question all

across these images and which only reveals through knowledge of the production context. Even if it shows scenes of a domestic nature, this isn't a family film. Contrarily to family films, made by amateur filmmakers that do not master cinematographic language and film randomly to the logic of game and familiar interaction, there is in this film a clear intention to produce a specific narrative at the service of certain objectives: to denounce Jessie Jane's situation and move those involved in her trial.

Driven by these intentions, Nelie Sá Pereira got the camera into prison and positioned herself in front of every action shot; intentions that are revealed in the same images, but only if we look at specific details. If we analyze, for instance, the sequence in which Jessie breastfeeds Leta, perhaps the most poignant in all the footage, we perceive a carefully constructed scene that couldn't have happened randomly.

For the frames shot in this scene, the filmmaker had to walk into the prison's patio, while Jessie and her baby remained inside. Once she got outside, Nelie filmed the small familiar circle formed by Colombo, Nora and Jessie breastfeeding Leta, always choosing to maintain in the foreground the prison bars separating her from the strip where the family reunited. The choice to focus on the iron bars is part of a cinematic strategy to create a *synthesis image* capable of summarizing in a single take all the elements constituting the dramatic situation in question. Nelie seems to want to translate the asynchrony between gestures and actions of the characters and the place where they happen. Jesse, Colombo, Leta and Nora always appear affectionate, smiling for the camera, but if the tragedy can't be felt in their bodies, it is evident on the scenery surrounding them.

**Figure 1** – Screenshot of the Super 8 footage.



Source: Arquivo Nacional.

The impact generated by these images shot by Nelie Sá Pereira at the Talavera Bruce is due, to certain measure, for the fact that they contain two different visibility regimes in one. They are firstly militant images, made with the purpose of denouncing Jessie Jane's situation in prison and to provoke the reopening of her case. They were thought of, since the beginning, as broadly public images. Secondly, it is also a film for Jessie Jane's family

to watch. Sent to her exiled parents, the footage carries in its scenic construction the same affective potency of visual correspondence. The *mise-en-scène* involving Jessie, Colombo and Leta reminds us of our own family films; they are images of affection and intimacy that also compose our domestic imaginary. When seeing these images, it is almost impossible not to identify with Jessie or not to imagine itself in her place. But this identification effect doesn't happen randomly, it is provoked by the filmmaker's choices, framings and narrative construction which strategy is to reveal the *intimate* inside the *political*.

However, the dimension of the scenic construction only appears to us when we are aware of the intentions guiding the filmmaker's perspective. That Nelie was a cinema student, that her objective was to denounce Jessie's situation and send the images to Stockholm, that at the moment of the recording she thought her images could be used at trial. This information helps us approach the images, and not fetishize them, these that, at a first glance, paralyze us with their force and oddity.

## Crossing files

When seeing the rough images of Jessie Jane in prison, we understood we should dig up that material and give visibility to what remained *full of past* and still affected the present time. Even if Lucia Murat's film brought the statements and told part of the political militant's history, elements attesting to the disturbing effects that prison footage brought were still lacking. We continued in accordance to a second proposition from Sylvie Lindeperg's historical analysis method, which is data crossing, giving us the possibility to establish a rich dialogue between audiovisual sources and textual documents.

We started by acknowledging that image appears as a sensible element of History, and the difficulties for historians was to conciliate rigorous research with the tensions where what is visible and affirmable never stops being transformed. Lindeperg (2013) defends that cinematographic image can bear the marks of these transformations, even if in a brief or minor way, in a fragment of a take or in the passage between two frames.

By crossing audiovisual and textual sources, we legitimize the importance of motion images by reiterating their importance on the writing of history. However, for that image to become a document, the historian must *make it speak* a construct a meaning for it, as the French Comolli and Rancière (1997) suggest in their book "*Arrêt sur l'histoire*". In this case, it is imperative that the questions are made from the present time.

This method's proposal is to think, in one aspect, cinema's role shedding light on filmmaker and object, and also to think the researcher's role in looking for vestiges they leave. Moreover, this principle is also micro-history's analytical method, which is to use a name as a main conductor in a research. In their 1981 article "*La micro-histoire*", Italian historians Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni describe an almost artisanal manner to explore life trajectories contained in the vast volume of documents produced and filed on a determined



society. Following the names of investigated subjects, daily records and bureaucracies could lead to a series of other documents, and with this long trail traced from small scales, it would be possible to give visibility to a “reconstitution of a life experience previously inaccessible to other historiographical explorations” (GINZBURG; PONI, 1981, p. 4).

In the books that place micro-history into practice, like “*Os fios e os rastros*” from 2006 (published in Brazil in 2007), Ginsburg (2007, p. 40) proceeds in accord to the idea that “our knowledge of the past is inevitably uncertain, discontinued, flawed: based on a number of fragments and ruins”. In his texts he shows us how to deal with these ruins: by searching the remains, the signals, the traces that endured this past to describe them, constituting a historiographical narrative. For such, one must mind the *details*, the distinct visions lain over a same object and mainly to what is opaque in the testimonies gathered on them. Inspired by Walter Benjamin’s readings on history brushed against the grain, Ginsburg (2007 p.11) draws attention to the importance of being attentive to uncontrolled elements of the text, to what escapes “the intentions of who produced them”.

Historian Lindeperg (2007) sets micro-history in movement. This proceeding is very clear in the already mentioned “Night and Fog”: A Film in History”, from 2007, a book that proposes the long observation of Alain Resnais’ film on nazi concentration camps to subsequently dislocate it “in time and in space” (LINDEPERG, 2007, p. 10). This process is given through the search of reused archive images’ origins and by the interest in acknowledging the reception to the feature at the time of its opening: through debates, interviews, censorship reports, critique, aside from production documents, film scripts and exchanged mail at the making of the film. The interest that will conjugate visual and audio components to the vestiges found in this textual documentation consists, according to Lindeperg (2007, p.10), in a scale exchange evoking micro-history, a sharp attention to negligible elements that “produce knowledge effects at a same time it raises questions and unobserved problems”. In this manner, the historian legitimizes moving images as an object and inserts them in the writing of the narrated history.

Following the principle suggested by Ginzburg (LINDEPERG, 2015, p. 206), which is, as in text, something always “escaping the will to reveal and the desire to see and understand”, the historian proposes a research on its genealogy, about the moment of its production, surpassing the dialogue between visual archives and written sources. In this process, an attention to the image’s murmurs would be essential, to the signals they contain. We should analyze their details, interpret it, relate it to documents, interviews and understand that it doesn’t offer more than a single approach and framing of reality.

Trailing the path pointed by Lindeperg (2007), we search for documents produced in the orbit of the film shot at Talavera Bruce prison in 1976. However, and once again, a dual movement sets this process: the closer we get by making use of Lindeperg’s method, the more we are inclined to find other solutions and reinvent the object inspiring us. There is an incorrigible distance separating us from Lindeperg (2007) that isn’t only imposed by the

Brazilian archive reality, but mostly by the own nature of the images we work with. While the author is interested in images that are part of a broadly distributed, *hipervisible* system, which is the case for Second World War images and the film *Night and Fog*, we dedicate ourselves to objects that, for a long time, have been marginalized from cinema studies and conservational initiatives.

As we mentioned earlier, the registrations we work with are rarely incorporated in archives along with their documentation processes. Our experience in different Brazilian institutions, where we find domestic film funds, allow us to affirm that, for most of the cases, the images enter the archives merely bearing the family's name. Only its interested researchers give information on the production's context and its producers.

There is also a last challenge inherent to these images' way of production. To recover history behind the production of *Night and Fog*, Lindeperg (2007) leaned over innumerable script versions and montages of the movie, over crew reunion protocols, over censorship warnings, among other official documents. As for family films, they are subjected not only to the precarious Brazilian audiovisual memory, but also to secrets, hushes and obliviousness, which are a constitutive part of images made with the purpose of remembering. These films do not have any script, budget, critique and censorship reports.

What are, then, the documents that could help us read these images? On one hand, they are those generated by the research itself, like the previously mentioned interviews with people involved in the visual recording and in its conservation itself. And on the other, there are documents relating to these images that aren't directly part of their conception. In this case, it is essential for researchers to position their investigation on an editing desk. For us, the montage is much more than a research procedure; it is the "ethics of the gaze" (ROLLET, 2011), that, by considering pieces, fragments and bodies not intrinsically correspondent, returns the images to History (BLANK, 2015).

For the investigation regarding the Talavera Bruce footage, we focused on the images to search for reports published in the epoch's newspapers; political police documents; interviews and testimonies later given by Jessie Jane, and finally, letters and photographs belonging to the private family fund and documents. In the research we conduct until now, we managed to gather a significant number of official iconographic and textual documents that refer to the plane hijacking, the arrest, but none of them refer to Leta's birth in prison or even about the private images shot there. As an example, we mention a research we did in *Jornal do Brasil*. By following the micro-history research method, we looked for Jessie Jane in the digital service of this paper, which gives access to all archives. For the 12 located reports, only one pointed to the presence of a baby in prison. It is a photography from December 1976, when Jessie Jane was visited by Cardinal Eugênio Salles in prison. It is a fundamental part of our research process to interrogate these silences and, through montage, to fulfill some voids.

**Figure 2** – “In Bangu penitentiary, Jessie Jane and her son were visited by Cardinal Eugênio Salles”



Source: Jornal do Brasil Archive (1976).

In this sense, Jessie Jane’s testimony in 2014 before the National Commission for Truth is a precious document. In her statement, Jessie Jane describes the challenges endured during years in jail and does what she calls a chronicle of the prisons’ history that, according to her, is a story of small struggles: the struggle for better cell conditions, a struggle for the achievement of objects, for a decent mattress, for sunbathing and light: “It took me years to have a window”, she says. The images shot by Nelie in prison bring us a dimension of the affection achieved in this precarious space.

The camera wanders through books displayed in improvised shelves, through personal hygiene objects, by the bed light next to the mattress lying on the floor and by posters and photos hanging on the wall. An image earning a special place in the filmmakers framing draws our attention: it is a picture of Jessie Jane with her husband Colombo exchanging smiles and crossing glances. To notice both are handcuffed, one must stop the film and mind the image’s detail. This is a couple’s wedding picture, married in 1971 under the consent of the government Justice.

Five years after more struggles for the right to achievements like these, Jessie Jane is granted with the right to intimate visits in her cell from time to time. The right to intimate visit was regulated in Brazil only in 1984, through the *Lei de Exceção Penal* (Penal Exception Law), but this kind of deal was only done after the attainment of the prison direction’s authorization, frequently through direct negotiation between prisoners and authorities. Even if the Desipe General Director (penal system department) had permitted it, a confidential

document we found in Rio de Janeiro's Public Archive (APERJ), emitted by the Special Investigations Unit in January 1978, demands confirmation to the fact that Colombo visited his wife. This restricted document reveals that the couple was still discreetly persecuted through information exchange, held today in the political police secret files archive.

In one of those visits, Jessie Jane got pregnant. To maintain minimal sanitary conditions for the survival of a newborn in a hostile environment like a jail cell motivated Jessie to struggle even harder for small, daily rights. In the family pictures, belonging to Jessie Jane's private files, we can understand how affections network weaved by friends and relatives made the mother and child's routine more bearable. In the registered data, they appear inside the jail cell, in the prison's patio, sharing brief, happy moments for being together. In these photographs, the prison bars are no longer frontrunners of the situation, as in the role they played in the Super 8 film. These images preserve, as in all home photos, the encounter's gestures, affection and intimacy that become possible with the confrontation of the prison direction and daily rights attainment.

However, every triumph was always on the verge of being lost. Magazines and newspapers from that time show us that, after Leta was out of prison, Jessie Jane endured a hunger strike that went on for weeks. She protested against the treatment given to women in prison, asked for her transfer from Talavera Bruce and the return of intimate visits, interrupted by the new direction.

## Conclusion

In "Night and Fog: A Film in History", Lindeperg (2007) asserts she treats her research objects as "palimpsest films". For the author, archive films could be compared to old parchments that, when reused, preserved previous inscriptions in invisible layers (LINDEPERG, 2007). With the method we exposed along the present article, we intend, as Lindeperg (2007), to unearth the surface of the image in order to find the successive layers of writing compose this image. Through this method, we also risk being led adrift from the images pleading our attention: the Super 8 filmed by Nelie Sá Pereira in 1976 at the Talavera Bruce Prison. In midst of dozens of documents we found on Jessie Jane, haunted by this militant's trajectory and fascinated by the materiality of the documentation, we impose to ourselves the prime task of always coming back to the images in motion that were filmed in that day.

With this process, we understood the greatest challenge to all research that seeks to unveil images' production contexts is precisely the risk of drifting away from its starting point. By asserting the necessity to construct a given method between history and aesthetics, we reiterate image analysis' principal function with the specificities that constitute cinematic language. In this sense, we can affirm that our research is arranged in a spiral movement, although different paths are trailed along the investigation, along the search for heterogenic material and the discovery of characters and statements, we always return to the starting

images, adding new perceptions to them. The image is the detonator, the starting point, but also the arrival for the elaboration of memories from obscure ages and narration of histories that carry potency, struggles and pain in their vestiges and details.

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Received on: 11.08.2018

Accepted on: 01.30.2020

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